

REMARKS

Upon entry of this amendment, claims 7, 9, 11 and 12 are all the claims pending in the application. Claims 1-6, 8 and 10 are canceled by this amendment.

Applicants note that a number of editorial amendments have been made to the specification for grammatical and general readability purposes. No new matter has been added.

I. Information Disclosure Statement

Applicants note that the Examiner has not returned the PTO-1449 form submitted with the Information Disclosure Statement filed on February 10, 2005. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner consider the references listed on the PTO-1449 form and return the initialed and signed form with the next Office paper.

II. Foreign Priority

Applicants note that the present application claims priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119. The Examiner, however, has not acknowledged the claim for priority or acknowledged receipt of the certified copy of the priority document in the Office Action. Accordingly, Applicants kindly request that the Examiner acknowledge the claim for foreign priority and confirm that the certified copy of the priority document has been received.

III. Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants thank the Examiner for indicating that claims 7, 9, 11 and 12 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in

independent form including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Applicants have rewritten claims 7, 9, 11 and 12 in independent form, thereby placing these claims in condition for allowance. Regarding rewritten claims 7, 9, 11 and 12, Applicants note that minor changes have also been made thereto in order to improve the form and clarity thereof.

IV. Claim Rejections

Claims 1, 6 and 8 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Sakakibara et al. (U.S. 4,618,948); claim 2 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sakakibara et al. in view of Weber et al. (U.S. 6,061,002); claim 3 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sakakibara et al. in view of Weber et al., and further in view of Hemed (U.S. 2003/0102965); claim 4 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sakakibara et al. in view of Sawanmoto et al. (U.S. 6,311,119); claim 5 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sakakibara et al. in view of Sawanmoto et al. and Weber et al., and further in view of Hemed; and claim 10 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sakakibara et al. in view of Yamada (U.S. 7,126,460).

As noted above, claims 1-6, 8 and 10 have been canceled by this amendment, thereby rendering the above-noted rejections moot.

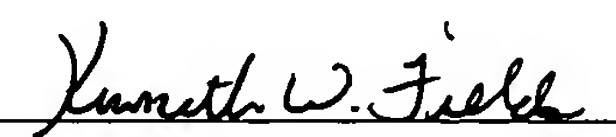
V. Conclusion

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited.

If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may best be resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

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February 16, 2007